

as next month. Some of them are the type of rapid tests that give a result on site.

One test uses a handheld device that can detect the virus within 30 minutes. Another test company has developed a way to speed up lab testing so that labs that now handle hundreds of tests can handle tens of thousands in the same period of time. These kinds of technologies and others are essential if we want to get our society fully reopened.

In early April, there was an average of 145,000 tests a day. Today, we are running about 800,000 tests, but often they are not the kind of tests we need, and they are not the numbers we need. We need tests that millions of people can take dozens of times. We need tests for every person who walks into an office or a factory or a nursing home or a school or a childcare center so that there is confidence in knowing they are not bringing the virus into that center. It is a high hurdle, but I think it is one that we are going to clear.

The HEALS Act includes another \$15 billion for testing to help in our priorities, which are nursing homes and daycare centers, childcare centers, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities. Those are areas where we think the government itself has an extraordinary obligation to make the difference. That \$16 billion, added to the \$9 billion of money for this purpose that hasn't been spent up until now, means that we have that kind of big investment to see that people have tests that work for them and work quickly.

For this to happen, Congress has to act. Congress has to move. We have to be supportive of efforts that get our society back to school, back to work, back to childcare, and back to better health.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of my colleague, Senator BLUNT, and the effort he has made to really focus in on how we can ensure there are appropriate levels of testing as we respond to this COVID pandemic. We recognize that the technologies, treatments, and vaccines are what will get us there.

In the meantime, there are many men and women across the country who are doing extraordinary work responding on the healthcare side, as well as responding as we deal with the economic impact and the economic fallout due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are a lot of challenges—incredible challenges, all over the country—challenges to the health sector, to our economy, and to our everyday life. I think it is fair to say that the last 6 months have been emotionally exhausting for people.

We have heard this before. We are all ready for COVID-19 to be over, but the virus is not ready to be over with us.

We are adjusting to a new normal, and as we deal with it, I think it is important to acknowledge the individuals—really, the heroes—in so many of our communities who have saved lives and really provided a level of care and compassion throughout it all.

Like all States in the Nation, Alaska has been severely impacted by this pandemic. Last week was a pretty rough week for us. We were included among the States with the fastest growing numbers in terms of rates of transmission. Fortunately, that seems to be tapering a little bit right now but only with very aggressive measures.

In my hometown of Anchorage, our mayor has resumed the hunker-down mode for us in terms of restaurants and bars being closed to indoor dining or a recognition that many of the advances we had been able to move forward on are now being ratcheted back. There are also additional travel restrictions.

For us, it is a time of year when our communities all over the State would be welcoming droves of tourists, all coming to enjoy the best of Alaska, but this year, our season is all but eliminated, almost nonexistent. Certainly, when it comes to recognizing the volume of tourists the cruise industry provides to Alaska, those have all been canceled. The flights that people would make to the State have been made more difficult by mandatory quarantine for our travelers. It has not impacted just the tourism sector; it has impacted the oil industry, the service industry, and our fisheries.

As I mentioned, as difficult as these economic times are, the most important thing we all need to be focused on is the health and safety of our people.

I have tremendous appreciation and gratitude for all the healthcare workers and the individuals who work to protect Alaskans on a daily basis.

In Alaska, we are extremely fortunate to have our COVID-19 health response led by Dr. Anne Zink. She is our State's chief medical officer. She, along with her team at the Division of Public Health, has been doing a great job under Governor Dunleavy's leadership to implement and communicate clear public health guidelines from the beginning of this unpredictable event. I think if you have an opportunity to meet Dr. Zink, she just projects calm. She projects confidence. She projects assurance.

She has absolutely earned the trust of Alaskans throughout this difficult time. She has done so not only because of her demeanor but really how she leads. She leads by example in modeling the behavior that she is encouraging all Alaskans to follow. She has probably taken social distancing and teleworking to a new level, as she teleworks from a yurt outside of her family home in Palmer.

She was able to take a small group of Alaskans to some villages—more remote villages in this State with Dr. Eastman from Health and Social Services when he came to Alaska. It was at

a time when most of these communities were very, very reticent—as many still are—to allow anyone in from the outside for fear of transmitting the virus. She not only led this trip very safely, but then, when she returned to her home, she led the example of self-quarantining for 14 days to ensure that anything she might have been exposed to was not going to be shared with those whom she loved. Her priority has been and continues to be flattening the curve, slowing the spread.

We know in our State that we are just a little more isolated. We are more separate. We are more remote. But we know that we are not immune from any disease of this type. That is surely evidenced by our history.

In 1918, when the Spanish flu—the last global pandemic—hit our State, more people died per capita in Alaska than almost anywhere else in the world. In many of our small and Native villages, 70 percent, 80 percent of the population was wiped out literally in a few-day period. It is hard not to think about that when we face this current pandemic.

In fact, Alaska was one of the very first States in the country to put together a coordinated response to the challenges presented by COVID. This was back in January.

On January 28, there was a chartered plane carrying U.S. consulate personnel and citizens from an area of China that had been at the center of the outbreak. That plane landed in Anchorage. The passengers had to debark the plane in order to refuel. They were moving to California.

We had a situation where there was a pretty quick scramble. Dr. Zink led her team, and they were able to mobilize very quickly and very efficiently to ensure a safe operation that was successful in ensuring the protection and the health and safety of all who were involved. They opened up a terminal there at Ted Stevens International Airport. They created a quarantine unit that delivered not one but two health screenings to over 200 passengers and crew members. It was a pretty extraordinary event that they were able to put together in very, very short order.

Those who were part of that said Dr. Zink's comments on this effort really reflect her strong leadership.

Dr. Zink noted:

It is easy to stay focused on all that we had to do in a short period of time to prepare and respond, but at the end of the day, this mission was about people. It was about American citizens, some of whom were working to serve our country. It was about families, and it was about helping each other in a time of need.

Dr. Zink has been doing extraordinary work as we have dealt with challenging issues as they relate to quarantine after travel, travel restrictions around the States that have been extraordinarily limiting.

She has worked with her team to put together plans of operation and protocols so that our fisheries can be successfully prosecuted, and they have

been a mark of success in terms of being able to identify and then isolate and then keep the virus from transmitting.

She is now very, very focused on how we safely return our kids back to school. I had a long conversation with her a few days back. She says that this is the ultimate challenge in that it is not just how we reopen schools but how we keep our schools open after that. That is our challenge.

She shared with me—she said: I thought that putting together the plans and the protocols for the seafood processors was going to be challenging and difficult in these very remote communities where they have limited healthcare in the event that you have the virus spread. That was difficult, but getting our schools open and keeping them open safely—this is the biggest challenge.

She said that schools are now her new seafood processors. So she is taking up the challenge aggressively.

Dr. Zink reminds us that at the end of the day, what we have to stay focused on is keeping people safe, keeping our families and our workers safe. This is a moment about all of us and how we respond during this great time of need.

I am extraordinarily thankful for Dr. Zink's leadership, both out in front and behind the scenes as she works with the many extraordinary Alaskans who are seeking to make a difference as we take on the daily challenges and battles that face us with the COVID-19 response.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

COVID-19 HEROES

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues in honoring those who have helped their communities to overcome challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are many everyday heroes who deserve recognition. We have seen the efforts of our first responders, law enforcement, teachers, postal and delivery employees, and store workers, among others, who have continued providing essential services in spite of the challenges brought on by the coronavirus.

As the chairman of the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, I have spoken many times about the critically important work of our farmers and our ranchers.

I see I am joined here on the floor by our Agriculture Committee chairman. I know he has been down here as well pointing out how our farmers and ranchers are continuing to provide food, fuel, and fiber for our Nation even during this pandemic. We are working to help and support them during this challenging time. Every American benefits every day from the work of those farmers and ranchers, who provide the highest quality and lowest cost food

supply in the world in tough times and even in times when we face something like a pandemic.

Today, I would like to recognize the valiant efforts of the healthcare professionals in my State and across this country and highlight some of the work our North Dakotans are doing—doctors, nurses, and many others working in hospitals and clinics across our State.

North Dakota's healthcare professionals have been working around the clock to prevent the spread of this virus and to treat those affected by COVID-19.

One example is Dr. Chris Pribula, a graduate of the University of North Dakota Medical School, who worked with a team to set up the COVID Care Unit at Sanford Hospital in Fargo. He was on duty when the first COVID patient arrived at the hospital and remained on duty for the next 18 days straight to make sure that staff and patients had everything they needed.

Over the past several months, I have held a number of roundtables with healthcare professionals in North Dakota. As we have discussed issues and challenges, one thing is clear: Our healthcare providers are diligent and dedicated in their efforts to prepare for and prevent the spread of coronavirus and to provide patients with the best possible care.

Another individual highlighted by his colleagues is Dr. Kremens, a critical care physician at Essentia Health who intubated and managed multiple critically ill patients at once. Dr. Kremens is a good example of the many intensive care and emergency department physicians and nurses who have fought on the frontlines of the pandemic and continue to do so.

We are grateful for the dedicated service of the many healthcare professionals in North Dakota and recognize that they and their loved ones have made many sacrifices during this health emergency.

We worked to provide our health providers with much needed support in the first three phases of the coronavirus relief legislation. For example, under the CARES Act, North Dakota rural hospitals and providers have received \$135 million to help with their efforts to combat COVID-19. As negotiations continue on the next phase of relief, healthcare remains a top priority.

While our healthcare providers have been working diligently, I would also like to recognize how members of our communities have stepped up to help our medical professionals as well.

An example of the community stepping up to meet the challenge during the pandemic is Proof Artisan Distillers, a small craft distillery in Fargo, ND. Back in March, Proof Artisan Distillery responded to the community need. Working with Tharaldson Ethanol in Casselton, ND, they began producing sanitizer for healthcare, assisted living facilities, first responders, Tribal and municipal entities, and

highway patrols from four neighboring States.

Proof Artisan Distillery's president, Joel Kath, relayed this story:

During our second day of production, I answered a frantic call from a supply director of a large memory care group. They were virtually out of sanitizer and would not be resupplied through their normal channels for many weeks. The caller broke down with emotion when I confirmed that we could easily supply their needs. It's a response I will never forget, and a constant reminder of the importance of our task at hand.

Another example from my home State is Infinite Leap, a company founded by Air Force veteran Mark Rheault that is using technology to help healthcare providers offer virtual waiting rooms. Infinite Leap's technology helps eliminate registration lines, reduce congestion in waiting areas, and decrease patient waiting times. Not only is this technology being utilized by healthcare providers to help maintain social distancing, the technology is also helping other industries, including restaurants and manufacturing plants, to safely reopen.

These are just a few examples of the individuals and organizations that have stepped up and helped their communities to meet the challenges during this health emergency.

Again, I thank our healthcare providers for their dedicated effort to fight this virus. We recognize the challenges they face, and we are truly grateful for their hard work. They are, in fact, truly everyday heroes.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

COVID-19 HEROES

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise today to join my many colleagues familiar with agriculture—the farmers, ranchers, growers, everybody in the food chain—and my thanks to Senator ERNST for really starting this, making a great speech last week. We are all trying to follow up with the same message to shine a spotlight on our Nation's COVID-19 heroes.

We have heard the term “hero” a lot during this pandemic. I believe the title is warranted to describe the many Kansans and, for that matter, all Americans who are doing extraordinary work and making great sacrifices to make this country safer and healthier.

Today, I want to talk about the heroes—the special heroes in agriculture: our farmers, our ranchers, our growers. The Sun comes out every day. A lot of us are in safe places. We have decided that is the best alternative for us, and so we have a lot of shutdowns.

Not farm country. The farmers, ranchers, and growers, they don't have that option. They have to do what they have to do in terms of planting their crops, harvesting their crops, taking care of their crops. They work long hours, day in and day out, to produce